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## Objects as Heirlooms: An A/r/tography Experience

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AN A/R/TOGRAPHY  
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has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Performing and Visual Arts in the School of Art and Design, Program of Art and Design.

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This arts-based research project is an autoethnography exploring the idea of heirlooms and what elevates an object to be classified as an heirloom. As the a/r/tographer in this investigation I explored what others viewed as heirlooms through reading, surveying, and interviewing. I then considered the objects that I identify as heirlooms. I made artwork throughout this inquiry which began as a reflection upon my personal heirlooms. Starting out as identifying what qualifies an object as an heirloom turned into the creation of potential heirlooms for my own family through a melding of various mediums. Our stories and memories surrounding an object and our connection with the individual that owned it are what elevate the object to heirloom status and that is what I have shown here.



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## CHAPTER I

### **The Loss of Voice**

*When I was a kid, every year for Christmas my grandma, Lavone, made each family & each grandkid a quilt. I remember the quilts being a highlight of Christmas and they became a tradition. One year one of my aunts made a comment about the quilts, "Another quilt? We're running out of room to store all of these." Then it ensued with the rest of the family and they came to a consensus that they had enough quilts and didn't need another one the following year. Except me. I told my grandma that I still wanted my yearly quilt; after all, it was a tradition.*

*Growing up, I spent a lot of time at my paternal grandparent's house and as a result I was very close with my grandma. During my 4<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, my Grandma developed a cough, it was mild but persistent. I noticed a slight change in her voice around the end of October. No one else in the family seemed to notice this change so I tried to think nothing of it. On several occasions, while on the phone with grandma she handed the phone off to my grandpa because she was coughing so violently. It seemed like every other week the doctors thought that they had the cause figured out, but the problem persisted.*

*During the spring my husband and I travelled to South Texas to visit my grandparents. We spent much of that trip meeting people that my grandparents spent time with, the people they were making memories and sharing stories with. During that trip I realized that her illness was serious. On one of the days that we had been out instead of*

*going immediately home my grandpa, Bud, drove to visit some of their friends whom he had noticed outside on their patio. I was sitting in the backseat with my grandma, she was laughing and then suddenly started to gag. It wasn't the first time that she had gotten sick during our time there but this one stood out because it was not preceded by the cough that she had been struggling with. Almost immediately my grandma said, "Get me home Bud." All I could do for the remainder of our trip was worry. My grandparents had plans to go on a fishing trip with some of their friends, leaving from Texas. I had so many questions but didn't really feel like it was my place to ask them. I also wasn't sure if anyone would listen. When I told my parents that I thought grandma was worse than what they were letting on, that it would probably be best for them to come home and not go on their fishing trip, they brushed it off. Looking back, I am glad that they went as they did not get another chance for a trip like that.*

*When they finally got home, things for my grandma were no better and it took over a year for her to get a correct diagnosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. In that time, she had lost most of her ability to speak. The life expectancy of someone with ALS is only between three and five years from when they first start showing symptoms. For my grandma that would have been that October when I thought her voice sounded different. Right around the three-year mark she seemed to deteriorate quickly; her hands were one of the later things to go, without them, no more quilting. This made those handmade quilts all the more priceless to me.*

*The Christmas one year after everyone had complained about the quilts, I was the only one that received the annual quilt from grandma. When the others inquired about why they didn't get a quilt I replied for my grandma stating that they most likely*

*didn't get one because everyone had complained about it the year before. The yearly gift of grandma's quilts began again and continued as long as she was able without complaint from any of the recipients.*

*Grandma was the person that I felt like I could just talk to without judgment or without trying to solve a problem, we could just talk. The loss of being able to talk to her as normal, then the overall loss, was hard for me. I lost a lot of myself during this time. I often felt like I did not have anyone to talk that understood or felt the effects of this in the same manner as me, watching a disease like ALS is hard. So, I clammed up. In reality I did have people that were experiencing the loss in the same way but because I had clammed up I just didn't realize or acknowledge it.*

*After Grandma passed away the loss of story through literal loss seemed to spiral. The year after my grandma passed away my younger cousin went missing. He completely vanished; the case remains unresolved. The following spring my paternal grandpa's health started to fail. Grandpa passed away a week after my daughter Charlotte's first birthday, almost 2 years exactly from when my grandma had passed away. That following summer my dad suffered a major stroke. The stroke affected much of his ability to talk, walk, and create. He is still gaining and making progress, but a great deal has changed due to the stroke. My maternal grandma's health had fluctuated for a long time but took a turn for the worst in the summer of 2018. After an injury, and a stint in rehab, she returned home and spent her final days there in hospice care. I pushed many of my memories of these people to the back of my mind, even the happy ones, because those too were painful to revisit and still are on occasion. It became almost more difficult to look back after having Charlotte and knowing that she would never know these people as I*

*had. Their stories and who they were all played a role in making me who I am as a person, a maker, an artist, a teacher, a researcher and a mother. They taught me the nature of caring for one another and caring for one's work. Our personal communities, and the narrative within, play a fundamental role in our growth.*

### **Rationale**

What are we left with when we lose those close to us? In our throw away culture the stories of the people we've lost often disappear. Objects often hold little value and if broken are frequently replaced instead of repaired. Within a culture of disposable over durable, have we lost the meaning that is held within the belongings of those before us? Heirlooms are typically considered one of the tangible things left from loved ones. With my family losses in mind, I felt a need to investigate the heirlooms and objects that my family has left behind along with the stories associated with them. Through the stories I wanted to understand what the loss of my loved ones and the loss of their voices means for me. Having a daughter myself, I felt the need to chronicle the stories of my lost family members and create representative portraits of them. In this arts-based research process I am searching for the purpose behind the heirlooms that I hold by creating pieces that include or reference those objects that came from family members that I have lost over the years. The project is an inquiry into why these people, their stories, and the select objects that I've held onto along with their stories are so important to me. This is an investigation that wanders between autoethnographic and a/r/tography. I delve into my family heirlooms and the experiences of others regarding heirlooms through reading, interviewing, and creating artwork which culminates in a mixed media form of a family portrait. I am interested in the personal narrative that participants share as well as my own



family history of heirlooms. Some of the artwork includes my own family heirlooms in an altered manner, including fabric handed down from my grandma.

What exactly elevates an object to the status of an heirloom? Heirlooms can include physical objects, recipes, narratives or any combination of the former. The importance of an heirloom is often determined by the experience that an individual has had with an object. It might be something that is associated with their own personal memory or something that helps in the retelling of family lore. This is an exploration into the concept of heirlooms and investigating the breadth of its meaning.

Stories tie people together whether it is in a family or in a classroom. Heirlooms are often associated with a narrative of some sort. Preserving story and heirloom becomes increasingly important with each new change or loss which prompted my interest in this research. Why complete this research now and not before these loved ones had passed away? It's hard to admit that you are losing someone and, in the end, in the final days it becomes all about showing them love and sharing, just a few more moments of connection. Then, after at the ceremonies that follow a death, stories are shared, and people reconnect with one another through narratives of the departed. This provides a chance to revisit who the person was and what they meant to you and others.

After my paternal grandma passed, my Aunt, my Mom, and I divided the fabric that she had accumulated over her many years of quilting. Some of it even came from my great grandma. This is the fabric that I have been incorporating into much of my work in various ways. Clay has been my primary medium as an artist. The exploration of using the fabric began small as I tried to find ways to incorporate it with my ceramic work. The exploration became a melding of mediums. Through my artwork and research of the

people and objects that are important to me, I was able to revisit their stories and incorporate bits of that into my work. The nature of this study has also impacted how and what I create. I have begun to again find my voice through this work both as an artist and educator. Part of that voice is established upon my past. My family's story is important to me. Through the incorporation of heirlooms into my work I, in essence, created what may be new family heirlooms someday, a method for me to share my story or memory. This memory work and reflection has been heavy for me on occasion, but it has also been restorative. "By reflecting critically on our actions and the reasons for them, we are 'attending to the actualities of our lives'" (Greene, 1988, p.7).

My research of heirlooms includes readings, surveys, and interviews. I created a body of artwork with the purposes of investigating, processing, finding value, revisiting, reinterpreting, appreciating, and making something of my own for my family, my child, and any others that may follow. As a teacher it is foolish to think that we can ask our students to create work with intention if we cannot find purpose in our own work.

Through the lens of a/r/tography "Art practice demonstrates that we cannot stand outside of practice and apply it. Indeed it is an emerging practice, a living practice" (Levy, 2018, p.37). Through this research I have found a renewed meaning in creating artwork and in turn brought substance to my work. I continue to cling to objects and stories as they hold meaning for me: story, our story, the stories of those we know are important. We must find ways to recognize that by doing so, we help ourselves and our students find value in creating and expressing story.

## **Research Questions**

My questions surround objects and heirlooms. These questions have arisen through my experience and research process. What elevates an object to become an heirloom? The article “‘It’s from My Grandma.’ How Jewellery [*sic*] Becomes Singular” describes a study by Ahde-Deal about heirloom jewelry that suggests “to fully understand product relationships, we need to understand those social processes in which objects get meaning beyond their design and their market value” (Ahde-Deal, Paavilainen, Koskinen, 2017, p.30). Heirlooms can bring a deeper understanding of where we came from. I have acquired so many family heirlooms recently that I am presented with these questions: What stories do objects hold? Do you become the story holder of that object? Will my heirlooms also hold meaning for my own children? What brings meaning to an object?

## **Definition of Terms**

**Heirloom:** For the purpose of this research an heirloom is defined as something that has gained meaning either to an individual or within a family. Something that is often passed on to other generations within a family.

**Object:** Something, an item that is tangible.

**Throw Away Culture/Society:** “The throw-away society is a human society strongly influenced by consumerism. The term describes a critical view of overconsumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items” (Gartner, 2016, para 1). A culture or society that is strongly influenced by consumerism. Objects are disposed of rather than being repaired.

## CHAPTER II

### **Idea of Heirloom**

“Integral to a sense of who we are is a sense of our past. Possessions are a convenient means of storing the memories and feelings that attach our sense of past” (Belk, 1988, p.148). Traditionally heirlooms are the tangible items that are left when we lose someone. The heirlooms I treasure are my paternal grandma’s quilts, my paternal grandpa’s tools, and some of my maternal grandma’s jewelry and clothing. I have only memories left from my cousin Eric, no tangible items. Whether the items are directly connected to a specific or invented memory these objects become a part of our family history:

...these connections are grounded in sentimental attachments to ancestors and descendants (often not yet born). These sentiments are powerful, but too complex to be understandable and to be explainable as such, so something external is needed to make them visible. (Ahde-Deal, Paavilainen, & Koskinen, 2017, p.32)

Some objects gain heirloom status through tradition. One of the stories told by Ahde-Deal, Paavilainen, and Koskinen (2017) describes an elder family member’s brooch, formerly a mother’s piece of engagement jewelry. It was brought to each subsequent family wedding to adorn the bride. Each bride wore the brooch differently and, they all included it somehow in their wedding day attire. This illustrates how someone in the family can be a holder of the heirloom versus owning it. Kept in the

family there was no true owner of the brooch other than the grandmother who had passed away.

Many different things are considered an heirloom, even recipes. My grandma made these amazing ginger snap cookies for as long as I can remember. I recall the smell of the molasses infused cookie dough and how it filled their whole house. There was a wooden board in the kitchen that slid out from under the counter where grandma always let the cookies cool; I often wonder if the board still smells like those cookies. I continue to make those cookies every year using her same recipe. Stacy Adimando wrote for the journal *Gastronomica* about heirloom recipes. She describes how she set out to make a traditional Italian ricotta pie. She began by speaking with her grandmother to obtain the family recipe:

As she [her grandmother] spoke, I heard the shh-shh-shh of my great grandmother grating the citrus zest, the gloop gloop gloop of her gently stirring the ricotta and egg filling, and that staticky [*sic*] rustling of flour sprinkling between her strong fingers. The imagined sounds felt as if they were my own real memories, and I was transported to another time and place. (Adimando, 2014, p. 82)

Heirlooms have the power to aid us in recalling memories as well as create new ones.

These heirlooms are deeply rooted in narrative, Adimando's endeavor to make the ricotta pie may not have been so meaningful without knowing the memory associated with it.

### **The Narrative Within an Object**

Land or property is another form of object that may be considered an heirloom.

Ralph Beer describes working the ranch that was his grandfather's, his father's, and

eventually his own. A ranch, like any other property is something that continually needs maintenance. In Ralph Beer's case much of this maintenance was done with his elders as he was growing up and continued when he was an adult. As a result of spending a lifetime on the ranch, he was familiar with the landscape. Acknowledging that some areas of the fencing gained their own particular character over time "the specific marks of workmanship of several different men...Over the years it had been repaired many times—sometimes with care, other times with obvious haste" (Beer, 1992, p. 64). He reflects on his memories as he is replacing sections of fence throughout the property. Throughout the account he references several items left behind: finding a shell casing from his grandmother and imagining what the target may have been; discovering a horse skull which was hung on the fence post by his grandfather; pointed staves cut with a hand saw by his grandfather. While repairing the last section of the fence he contemplated "A powerful image of an era had been erased; the evidence of our work cleaned away as if it had never been done" (Beer, 1992, p. 65). After he repaired the fence and erased the work that had been done by other generations Ralph Beer became the only remaining holder of memories of the land to be passed on to future generations. By completing this work on family land Beer is able to reflect on the memories and stories of the place and the things found there. If the work was being done by someone that was not familiar with the family or the land, then the same meaning may not hold true and the land would not represent an heirloom for that individual.

Aarthi Ajit writes about vocalizing the stories that are bound to heirlooms through several interviews with British Nationals from Kerala, India. Conversations with each of the women surround tharavauds, their ancestral houses. Some of the houses were still

standing and some had been sold or demolished. In the instances that the home was still standing, the home was a form of heirloom. These family homes also had land designated as a family burial ground “representing the presence of both past and present *tharavaud* members” (Ajit, 2015, p.71). Ajit speaks to several different women and their accounts of their *tharavaud* all vary but what he found in common was this:

...the objects that have been revealed and illuminated by my interviewees’ life stories demonstrate that physical or remembered objects of memory could lead to a rejuvenation of personal family history. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine that without the vocalization of the objects in question, the ‘values’ of the object could fade away. Even a family heirloom could be downgraded to a simple thing. (2015, p.76)

Some of the items that were saved from these homes were simple items like a whiskey jug, a shaving mug, or a small brass para (a container used to measure), simple items, but ones that the individuals could imagine their families using. In some cases, it was all that was left behind. A few items that were discussed started traditions, even though it may have been unintentional. An interviewee, Kamala, had only an Arat sari left from her home, she discovered that her mother wore it when she was a bride at her wedding and so Kamala and her sister also wore it for their own wedding ceremonies. In an attempt to keep the conversation surrounding the sari open, Kamala wears the sari for special occasions as well.

“‘It’s From My Grandma.’ How Jewellery [*sic*] Becomes Singular” discusses what processes an everyday object goes through to become an heirloom. In repeated instances there is reference to specific memories being attached to objects and that these

same objects became an integral part in the telling of a story and helped spark other recollections. The jewelry also helped those who had lost someone still feel close to that individual. Many of us probably consider what we are leaving behind for our children, nephews, nieces, friends, or family, especially when they are growing up in a world that is so different from that one which we grew up in. One account mentioned in this article discusses a pendant that was handed down within a family:

When I got the piece of jewellery [*sic*], my mother had made a card to go with it, having the names, pictures and birth years of all the people who have worn it. Mother also wrote the story of the pendant on the card. The pendant is important to me because it will always remind me of my mother and also grandmother, whom I have never met. (Ahde-Deal, Paavilainen, and Koskinen, 2017, p.32)

The receiver of the heirloom had never met the grandmother but because the mother created a unique experience in receiving the piece it helped the receiver to find a meaningful connection with the pendant as well as her family.

Marice Rose (2012) explains the details of a lesson, which she uses to engage her students in art history. In the lesson students must bring in a family heirloom. It is an art history class so the students have the specification that whatever heirloom they choose to present has to be an object that they can identify as art. This forces students to analyze their own definition of art as well as make the historical aspect of art more tangible. One account in the story describes an heirloom held by one of the student's uncles, a 110-year-old cantaro. The student learned from this assignment that her great grandfather had created the jar for his daughter. He had made one for each of his children but this one was



different from the rest, made from red clay from the high mountains, because she was the sole daughter in the family. The jars were used to store water as the nearest water source was a day away (Rose, 2012, p. 48). This is an heirloom that the student had seen regularly at her uncle's home but had never known the story of until the assignment. Learning the background of the piece brought new value to the piece but she also learned more about her own family history through this assignment.

With the passing of relatives, we inevitably lose some stories, memories, and tellings that will never be shared or known again. Our experience connects us with our heirlooms on an individual basis, even if it is imagined experience. When Beer discussed finding the shell casing from his grandmother's gun, wondering about what the target had been led him to consider what animals were in the area, which prompted him to imagine the scene. Without coming across this object Beer may never have curiously considered what his grandma had been aiming at that day. These objects bring back memories and help us engage with the past through remembrance or new quandary. This is similar to what Adimando had thought when she was searching for her ricotta pie recipe:

*What if, I thought, what if I had never set out to make this pie? I might have never stumbled upon this family recipe, nor have heard the story of that morning at my great grandmother's house. It all would be lost to our family forever. (2014, p. 82)*

Without these objects, some of the stories associated with them may in fact be lost. The narrative associated with individual heirloom brings value to the piece, not monetary value but instead intrinsic value to the holder.

### **Modernizing an Heirloom**

Specific memories may be associated with heirlooms, but people may be left with belongings of a beloved person that they invent meaning from as well. This might depend upon the nature of what occurred toward the end or after someone's life. For example, as I consider my maternal grandma's items, I know that not much has been handed down between generations in that branch of my family. Knowing that the objects I have belonged to her, help me to think upon moments spent with her. I hold on to the items to help remember her and save them possibly for some other use in the future. Some may even alter heirlooms and thereby create new meaning by doing so.

Natalie LeBlanc, in "Becoming Through A/r/tography" describes her first a/r/tography project. As a child she learned to sew from her mother. She created an assemblage, a dress, made up of clothing which she had collected from different parts of her life, some included pieces that had been made by her mother. LeBlanc describes her experience unpacking the garments, "As I touched each piece of fabric, memories began pouring out of them like a flood. The patterns, the smells, and the stains transported me to a different place and time" (Leblanc, Davidson, Ryu, & Irwin, 2015, p.360). New context can be created through the alteration of an heirloom.

In constructing my dress, I was reflecting on much more than the garments of clothing that I had once worn. I was thinking about the relationships that I had formed when I had been wearing them. I was becoming aware of the contexts that had helped shape who I am: the beliefs I hold, the personal virtues that I consider to be important and the ideological

perspectives that I entertain. The process of (re)constructing my fabric opened up a site for which I was able to gain an understanding about the person I was and am becoming *in relation* to the people and the cultural and societal structures that have also played a role in shaping me throughout my life. (2015, p.364)

Natalie's own narrative was deeply embedded in each of the garments that Natalie chose, they were connected to people, places, events, where she had worn them. Using them to construct a singular piece gave her opportunity to identify how each garment represented something that had changed her in some way. One definition of heirloom describes it as "noting or relating to an old plant variety that is being cultivated again" ("Heirloom," 2018, para. 3). Natalie cultivated her clothing articles in a method that gave her insight into her own story and refreshed the meaning of clothing items. "I think that the best pie recipes nowadays do borrow a classic idea or archetype but give it a new spin. That's the best kind of recipe, one that kick starts a new family tradition" (Adimando, 2014, p.83).

Heirlooms help us learn more about our family history and ourselves. They can also be used to help us understand more about our broader community. Sharif Bey discusses the idea of "Rephotography" and how it can be used to "recreate/reinterpret historical gaps (those aspects of people, places, and events that cannot be located) through various media (writing, performance, and/or visual arts)" (Bey, 2013, p.19). My family has started documenting place similarly to the idea of rephotography. My great grandparents owned laundromats and some of the great grandchildren have visited them, photographed them, and shared them on a social media page with the family. We even have a spaghetti strainer, which was a promotional item from one of their Laundromats

that we still use, it makes me think of them with each use (see *Figure 1*). It is interesting to see what places have become, even if we didn't see them as they were in the past.



*Figure 1:* Family Laundromat as it stands today and strainer from Laundromat, Photo Credits: Halee Tooley & Samantha Disney-Saxton.

An heirloom is not necessarily something that is created with the intention of it becoming an heirloom, but the artwork of Gina Czarnecki is exactly that. She worked with scientist John Hunt to create *skin-portraits* of her daughters. Only after being diagnosed with uterine cancer did the piece become entitled *Heirloom*.

An heirloom is an object of value given by older members of a family to younger members of the same family over many years. This was my gift of value to my children, the possibility of either reconstructing their faces, biomedically rejuvenating their appearances or owning an artwork of possible value. (Czarnecki, & Hunt, 2017, p. 84)

A mold was made of the daughters' faces, then glass sculptures were created which supported the growth of cells. Certainly a modern take on an heirloom, this family has an interesting narrative to pass along if the glass sculptures are passed to other generations. Imagine having a sculpture of your great great-grandma that also contains her living cells.

### **Reflection**

“Heirloom is fundamentally a personal portrait” (Czarnecki & Hunt, 2017, p. 84). Objects that I view to be family heirlooms will become meaningless if the story of them is not shared with other generations. Heirlooms will disappear, and the stories will be lost. That may be the destiny for some of my own heirlooms when I am gone, although I hope not. Through investigation, reinvention, and re-interpretation of my own heirlooms, my aim was to rejuvenate some of the stories, memories, and meaning for myself and my children, because that’s all that I can really do. I have no control of what happens after I am gone but I can try to make our heirlooms relevant while I am here.

### Chapter III

#### **Investigation Strategies**

Looking over the losses within my family many of the things that were left behind have become cherished objects, some things even achieving heirloom status. Looking into these heirlooms has become a means to help me reestablish a positive connection with my memories of those lost family members as well as create new experiences of my own. I explored my own family narrative along with narratives surrounding heirlooms. My work is qualitative arts-based research by means of art making, with incorporation of heirlooms left to me into my own artwork. An example is the incorporation of my grandmother's fabric into my ceramic work. This research fits with a/r/tography and overlaps with autoethnography as I studied how an object gains heirloom status along with the narratives and stories of heirlooms. The investigation into my heirlooms prompted me to also examine the narratives associated with those objects that I hold dear. This aroused a further curiosity as to what heirlooms other people hold on to, and what qualifies something an heirloom. I conducted surveys and an interview to gain insight into the notions that others hold surrounding heirlooms. What are the things that we keep and what do we dispose of after the loss of someone we were close to? What meaning do these objects hold that is so significant that we hold on to the objects for multiple generations?

## **Procedure**

I, as the researcher, collected the data through creating and reflecting upon on my personal work, conducting an interview and through an online survey. I started my research in fall of 2017 and concluded in the summer of 2019. Reflection upon my own family heirlooms or lack of them, guided me in my initial investigations into objects as heirlooms. Part of my investigation included creating artwork because, “thinking like an artist also requires an emphasis on the big picture, the essence, and presenting it coherently. Pay attention to both the forest and the trees” (Levy, 2018, p.12). Data was additionally gathered through an interview with my mom. Input from peers was gathered through discussion boards on Canvas throughout my time at University of Northern Colorado. I conducted an anonymous online survey using the Qualtrics program to gather a broader range data. Questions for the online survey are shown in Table 1. These also served as starter questions for the interview but allowed room for further discussion dependent upon the response of the participant.

1. How do heirlooms begin?
2. Who or where do heirlooms come from?
3. What family heirlooms do you own, if any?
4. How do objects help give us a deeper understanding or knowledge?
5. What do you feel is the worth or value of your heirloom?
6. How do you determine the value?
7. Are there any traditions surrounding your heirlooms?
8. What are your hopes for the heirlooms that you have?
9. Are there any heirlooms in your family that you wish you had received, if yes, what and why?
10. How do you think that an heirloom gains heirloom status?
11. Would you ever alter an heirloom? If yes, how?
12. Are there any intangible heirlooms? If Yes, explain.
13. Whom do heirlooms belong to?
14. What does experience have to do with heirlooms?
15. How do you anticipate that you would feel if you lost an heirloom (for example in a house fire or similar tragedy)?
16. What narratives/stories have been passed down through your family, if any?
17. Are there any heirlooms or stories in your family that you wish you knew more about?
18. Are there any heirlooms in your family that have a story associated with them?
19. Do heirlooms affect our family narrative/history, how?
20. Are there any heirlooms that are intangible?

*Table 1: Survey & Interview Prompts/Questions.*

### **Participants**

All participants were 18 or older, those that by societal standards, are considered adults. Prior to beginning the questions in the survey, participants were prompted to consent to be included in the research as well as indicate their age. If a participant indicated that they were not 18 or older then the survey ended, and they could not proceed to any further questions. A link to the survey was provided via QR Code posters in public places (such as art centers, art events, libraries, etc.), social media, e-mail to peers, and e-mail to colleagues to obtain a wide selection of participants.



### **The Data**

I collected data in the following ways: photographs, artwork, artwork reflection, personal experience with heirlooms, interviews with my family, and online surveys. Online survey data was collected from anonymous participants. The answers to these questions are based upon each participant's personal experience, as heirlooms are very personal to an individual's memories or background. Patricia Levy summarizes Josselson's (2006) comments on story research, "Narrative researchers attempt to avoid the objectification of research participants and aim to preserve the complexity of human experience" (Levy, 2018, p.8).

In this research I attempted to identify common reasons objects become heirlooms or gain heirloom status. Use of qualitative arts-based research allowed me to critique the meaning and underlying narratives that are present and/or develop surrounding the topic of family narratives & heirlooms through the methodology of a/r/tography and autoethnographic method. After all data was gathered, I interpreted the data, by looking for commonalities or distinctions between the data and my own experience with family heirlooms. This is why my own personal reflection is such an integral part of this research. I looked for themes in the data surrounding family heirlooms, common types of heirlooms or stories that are repeated in multiple responses. Results from data collection have been used in the final written findings from this research process.

### **Limitations**

When sampling participants a variety of experiences and narratives were valuable to compare and fully understand the outcomes. Many of the questions focus around the narrative of objects. A potential limitation was that someone could have answered

untruthfully because the surveys were anonymous and the answers were experience-based, this would have given false results. An additional limitation with the online survey was when the responses of an individual prompted new questions I could not investigate that further. Time and schedules were a huge obstacle when conducting interviews. There is not a definite finding I expected from the results. Instead, I was interested in the variety of what I discovered.

## Chapter IV

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Investigative Lens**

I completed my research involving heirlooms as an a/r/tographer, artist, researcher, teacher/learner.

Art is the visual reorganization of experience that renders complex the apparently simple or simplifies the apparently complex. Research is the enhancement of meaning revealed through ongoing interpretations of complex relationships that are continually created, recreated, and transformed. Teaching (learning) is performative knowing in meaningful relationships with learners (Irwin, p.31, 2004).

As an artist I created a variety of artworks that included heirlooms that were left to me and the artwork in its completion has potential to gain heirloom status for my own children. As a researcher I created artwork to inquire into my topic, explored the literature surrounding the topic, gathered information through an anonymous survey, and interviewed my mom. As a teacher I worked on much of this in my classroom around my students, getting their informal feedback along the way. As a learner I learned a lot about what I hold on to and value as well as why, I also found new meaning in my work as an artist during this research process.

My research process utilized autoethnographical methods as I looked into my family's heirlooms along with what I personally considered to be heirlooms.

Autoethnographers gaze back and forth. First they look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience. Next they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations...distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred. (Given, 2012, para 2)

The process began as reflecting upon my own experiences then grew into comparing that to the experiences of others through literature, interview, and survey. In the end the research cycled back to my own heirlooms and creation of what might become heirlooms for my own children.

### **Survey Stories**

The anonymous online surveys yielded the widest range of data and a variety of responses and stories. I would have loved to have known who some of the individuals were so that I could have had a continued discussion with them. The most commonly repeated heirloom objects that people mentioned were dishes, guns, bibles, a few handmade objects-mostly sewn, and jewelry. An intangible thing that was mentioned was temperament or demeanor. This was not something that I had originally thought of but I could see behavior as an heirloom within my own family. The survey was the sole place that I found demeanor to be considered an heirloom.

Heirlooms often carry a story with them. This was expressed repeatedly in the survey responses that I received. One of the stories that stood out was about a ruby ring. Rubies are the birthstone for the month of July so this particular ring was traditionally passed down in the family to any women who have a birthday in July. The participant

stated that in all the years the tradition has been around, someone in the family has always had a birthday in July. There were many more stories shared in the online responses. My primary observation from the survey collection was that people either had a story about the object that they discussed or a close connection with the owner of the object.

### **Family Objects**

After gathering a variety of artwork, photographs, and surveys, I interviewed my mom about heirlooms and which objects in her possession she considers to be heirlooms. It was interesting because many of the things that she held to be heirlooms were not objects that I knew much about: a fire department statue, a baseball from the Rockies, a BB gun of what origin she was unsure. Many of these were things I had seen before but I had never thought of them as something that would be passed down. Some items we discussed, the basin and pitcher that my great grandma made and my great grandpa's mantel clock, were prominent items in our home. I knew the origin of those items, although I never knew until this conversation that my great grandma had made the pitcher and basin. Interestingly, I had asked for photos (see *Figure 2* and *Figure 3*) of the objects that she considered to be heirlooms and neither of those were among them. She also never previously shared stories of the items that she deemed important enough to photograph with me until the interview.



*Figure 2: Family Heirlooms, Objects deemed to be heirlooms by my Mom  
Photographs by the author.*





*Figure 3: Family Heirlooms, Photographs deemed to be heirlooms by my mom  
Re-Photographed by the author.*

Many heirlooms have some sort of emotional attachment but my mom became emotional only once during the interview, about only one item. When my grandma progressed with ALS, she knew what was coming and she knew it would be soon. During her last Christmas she purchased a Precious Moments figurine for each of the women in the family. She had bought one for me every year for my birthday growing up so they had become a bit of a tradition. She chose these figures for us based upon our individual relationships with her. Mine depicts three generations of women sewing a quilt together, something I found to be rather fitting. It was interesting because multiple times throughout the surveys, readings, and interviews people mentioned that heirlooms are something that are handed down. This object was not passed down but gifted, and considered an heirloom based on its meaning. This is an indicator of how important the story of the heirloom is. It may not be the object but instead what it represents to the individual.

### **Revisiting Memories**

Early in the graduate program I was examining community. This directed my interest in to investigating heirlooms and my family. I polled social media for stories about my paternal grandparents, which I then incorporated into a sculptural family tree full of narratives, as seen in *Figure 4*. A ceramic trunk served as the foundation, I collected branches from our home to be used in the assembly of this mixed media piece. Stories of my grandparents were included both by typing and handwriting them onto canvas that I had sewn onto the branches. Charlotte, my daughter, even scribbled on one of the canvases, making it a multi-generational piece. The materials that I used to sew the canvas on were strips cut from my grandma's fabric and grandpa's ties. This piece was



the beginning of a rediscovery of myself as well as the recognition of how many people my grandparents' lives had touched. The piece represented how important the telling of story is in remembering someone. "A final portrait is a gift that reveals what is often concealed from the world. It is a chance to explore, preserve, and gain perspective on a subject with such depth that you cannot help but be drawn into it" (Buffington & Wilson, 2013, p.167).



*Figure 4: Family Tree, Size:30"x 22"x 22", Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*

At my grandpa's memorial service, the pastor, who was very close with my grandparents, told a story about my grandpa and it became lodged within my memory. At the time of the story my grandparents lived in Golden, Colorado and the pastor and his wife lived in Yuma, Colorado. Those cities are about two and a half hours away in distance. The following is paraphrased from that story at his memorial service. The pastor, stranded with car trouble, called my grandpa one afternoon. He described to my grandpa what issues he was having and my grandpa, who was well versed in fixing cars, explained to him what he thought the problem might be. The pastor wasn't sure if he had the right tools or that he could fix the issue on his own. My grandpa, being who he was, responded by saying that he was on his way. The pastor was able to fix the car without my grandpa driving two and half hours to assist with repairs, but the fact is he would have dropped everything that he was doing to go help illustrates the essence of who he was. Stories that I received through the process of reaching out on social media echoed similar expressions of who my paternal grandparents were. This is relevant because part of what I hope to pass down to my children is the story of our family, not simply just the objects; although the objects help in the remembrance and telling of the story.

Reopening the connections to memories I had of my grandparents led me to create the piece seen in *Figure 5*, much of which I completed in my classroom often working on it with students present. The carvings that are removed from the top are actually silhouettes I created from photographs of my grandma's roses. When the time came for my grandparent's house to be sold after their death, the belongings were divided, and given to family members or sold. When asked what I wanted, I requested to have the rose plants from my grandma's garden. For as long as I can remember she always had these

beautiful, huge, fragrant roses in her yard, which bloomed all summer. My aunt and uncle dug up the roses and my mom drove them to our home, where I planted them in our yard. The roses have continued to bloom every summer. Hanging bulbs in the piece signify the connection we have with others and the copper wire highlights the richness of that connection. Sharing of experience brings life establishes new growth as signified by the copper wire. Scattered in the bottom of the piece are blank bulbs, which are not connected this is to signify what happens when we disconnect ourselves from others, or at least what my experience with disconnection has been. In choosing the overall form, I picked something that I found to be aesthetically pleasing and worked well with the other design elements. One of my students mentioned to me the form resembled a tombstone. In a/r/tography “Artists, researchers and educators do not work in isolation... Furthermore, a/r/tographers are not limited to academic circles. They can be practicing artists, teachers, learners, and students” (Given, 2008, para 5). This was a connection that I had failed to see until the moment my student noted the similarity but it was quite possibly a decision that had subconscious significance. It is possible the design signified the florally imbued tombstone that I thought she might have chosen had their ashes not been buried in a military cemetery. With the recognition of that fact, this piece, by one aspect, became a memorial to my broken connection with my memories of my maternal grandmother. Something in my subconscious made me select that form. Most likely it was the burying of memories.



*Figure 5: New Roots, Size 19"x10"x5", Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*

Upon the deaths of my grandparents, I shut out a lot of my memories of them even positive memories. That may have been because it was hard for me to consider my life without their positive influence and support. They had been there for every major event in my life. They, of course, were not the only pillars of support that I have. I also did not want to imagine my daughter's life not having the impact of these people that had been so significant and precious to me. At the time of their deaths this burying of the memories was necessary in order to make it through the day and hold my emotions together. Along with the smothering of memories I also lost a part of who I was. I did not realize this until more recently.

### **Meaning in Pieces**

Many participants in the survey wrote that they would never alter an heirloom. I think this response makes sense given the context of the question. Had I made it more specific there may have been different responses (For example would you alter unused paper or fabric?). In the instance of my work, the use of the heirloom brought another layer of meaning to it. I did not use it how grandma would have but instead used it in a way that built meaning for me and my family. I believe that this is how the true nature of heirlooms should be.

My research around objects as heirlooms began by looking into what I had in my own home. One of the left behind things I have is a rather extensive collection of fabric. As I said earlier, my grandma's collection of fabric was divided among members of the family including myself. This particular fabric is a medium that I have hesitated to use because it was hers. Once the fabric is used it is also transformed into something different. Grandma's fabric is one of the heirlooms that I have treasured most. Thinking



about using the fabric I always came back to this question, how could I possibly make anything that is worthy of using it, cutting it, reattaching it? When used, essentially it is not Grandma's anymore at that point but instead becomes mine, or at least that is what I thought as I began this inquiry of what happens to the non-specific objects that are left behind. My grandma was an avid quilter. I enjoy sewing and quilting but not in the same traditional style.

I've made functional ceramic work over the years, primarily made with the intent of selling it, because it was a primary source of our household income. This intent to sell the functional work had disconnected me from making meaningful pieces. Investigating heirlooms brought me back to it. My inquiry began with asking how I could overlap my work with my grandma's work. In order to rejuvenate meaning in my artwork incorporation of some of her fabric with my ceramic pieces seemed like a good place to start, since I cherished her fabric. I wanted to find a way to use sewing and fabric, something that Grandma had taught me so much about growing up, into the medium that I am most familiar with. We both made functional objects: she made quilts, I made dishes. The two items are both utilitarian and long lasting. My task became finding a way to meld the two mediums. I began making what I felt was the most essential utilitarian clay piece, a bowl. Then I selected fabrics from my collection that truly reminded me of my grandma. I attached the bowls together in several ways as seen in *Figure 6*. Some were attached through clay processes and some were connected by sewing the clay together. I used the fabric to wrap the ceramic bowls melding our two mediums, thereby removing the utilitarianism of each while creating a unified whole.



*Figure 6: Mending Memories Series, Top: Stitched Together, 15"x8"x6", Center Left: Entangled, 13"x10"x4", Center Right: Melded 3 1/4"x10 1/2",x6 1/4", Bottom: Let's Get Stitched, 6 1/4"x6 1/4"x2", Mixed Media, Photographs by the author.*

After becoming familiar with applying the fabric to the ceramic work I looked back on the New Roots artwork (*Figure 5*). I decided to incorporate the flower imagery once again into these pieces to further overlap the story of my grandma and me (*Figure 7*). This created a new memory and new way to integrate her story with my own. Talking about the process of this work and the meaning surrounding it, I am able to share my memory of her with others and keep it relevant and fresh in my mind. Additionally Charlotte, my daughter, was present when I made these pieces and she helped me on a few pieces, which helps to make the pieces memorable for her as well.



*Figure 7: Gardening Series, Top: Gardening 1, 6 ½"x6 ½"x4", Bottom: Gardening 2 6"x6"x7", Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*



### Functional Objects as Heirlooms

Many of the pieces that had been left behind to me were functional objects. My paternal grandma left me the first sewing machine that she had saved up for and purchased on her own. Grandma left many things to me intentionally. There were specific things she had in mind for each family member, she knew what would hold value for each of us. My grandpa was different though. He did not really leave anything with an intention of where it was to go to. Many of the things he wanted people to have he gave to them before he passed away, possibly in an effort to know it would be used or enjoyed. Over his lifetime he accumulated an assortment of tools which was as extensive as my grandma's fabric collection. I kept some of his tools. Some I use in my classroom and some at home. I wanted to create a piece that related to him, that melded our media together.

I started with a plain but stable vase, one which I thought was a good representation of my grandpa, as much as a vase can be a representation of someone. I have a pair of his pliers that I kept. They are so well used that the handles are worn down and one handle is thinner than the other. They were unique to my grandpa's grip so I used them to create a pattern on the vase. The pattern is not perfect because, again, the handles were not a perfect form (*Figure 8*).



*Figure 8: Grandpa's Pliers, 10''x7''x7'', Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*

One of the things that I had hoped to receive from my grandpa after his passing was some of his clothing. I kept this to myself though. When my grandpa passed away,

many of his clothes were donated before I had a chance to look through them. I had previously had my mind set on some of his and my grandma's clothes. It was my hope to someday make them into a quilt or something of the like. When my dad informed me that they had already donated most of his clothing my heart sank to my toes. As with many things, I thought that I had more time. Thankfully, my dad had pulled a few shirts that he was going to keep, which he willingly gave to me. There were also many of my grandpa's ties still at his home. I gathered some of the ties along with the shirts. Again using the pattern work from my grandma's roses, I created cutouts in the clay. These pieces are wall pillows, meant to hang flush on the wall (*Figure 9*), similarly to a portrait of a loved one. In these pieces I tried to create an overlap, or portrait, of two people who had impacted me in so many ways. My grandma's roses are filled in with my grandpa's ties. The fabric that belonged to my grandma had been bittersweet to use, but not as hard as my grandpa's ties. The ties just didn't seem like something that should be cut up. The finished piece came back together as a portrait of my grandma and grandpa united in a new form.



*Figure 9: Efflorescence Series, Top Left: Efflorescence 2, 2"x8"x6", Right: Efflorescence 3, 10"x5"x4", Center Right: Efflorescence 5, 10"x5"x4", Bottom Left: Efflorescence 4, 2"x8"x6", Right: Efflorescence 1, 11"x6"x1", Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*

### **Ripples of Change**

I went through a multitude of changes during my time in this program at UNC. Shortly after I received my notice of acceptance, my grandpa passed away. Life went on quickly, especially with young children to take care of and a full time job. The time to

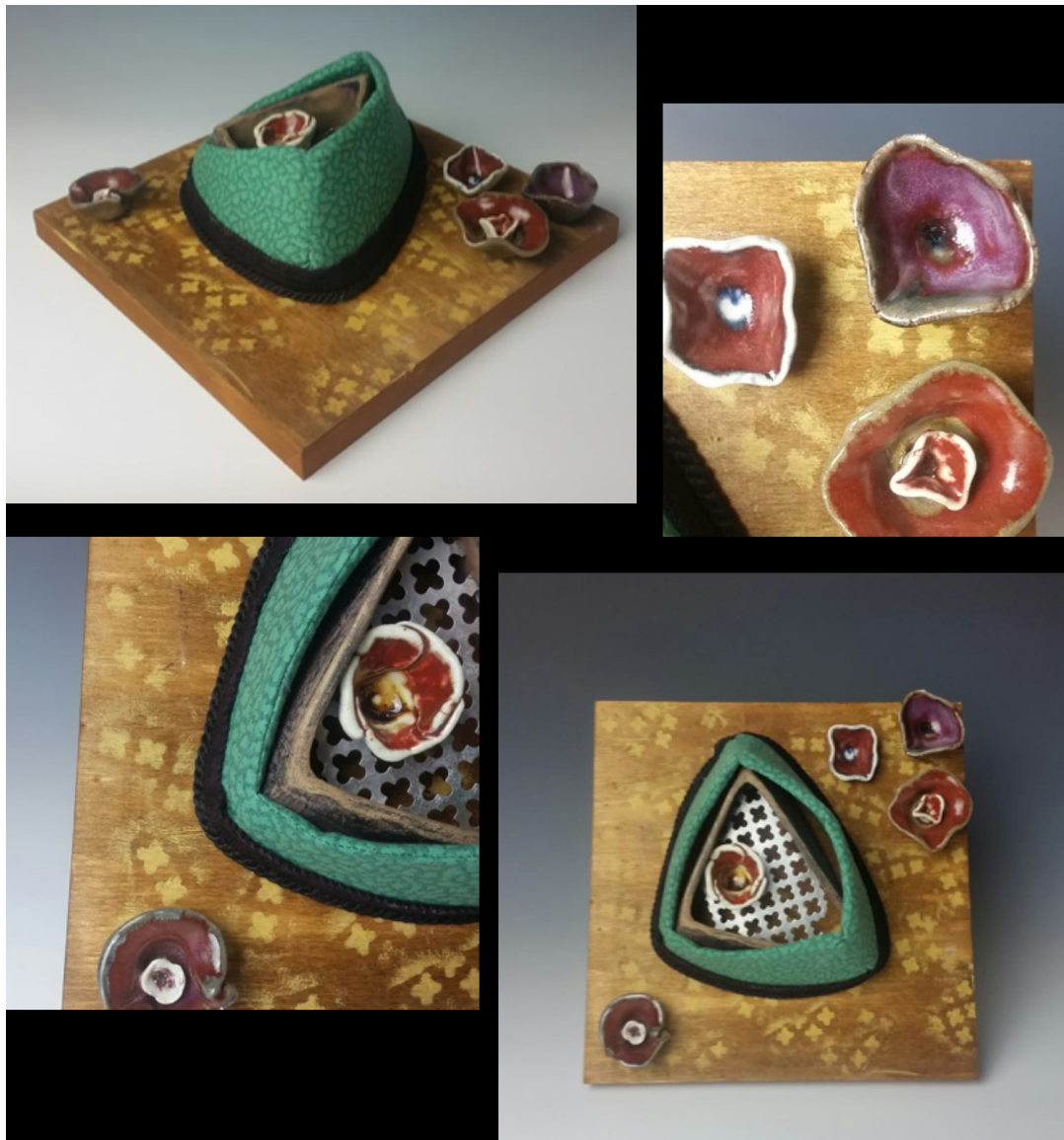
mourn over a loss is short. Charlotte grew, of course as I expected her to, but more rapidly than expected. Then my maternal grandma passed away during the first summer of the program. Again, life continued. I started work at a new school, one in which I feel supported and was able to find a sense of community. Throughout all this my family was supportive and I always felt loved. I suppose without that feeling, their belongings, which serve as reminders of them, may not hold as much value to me.

### **A Family Portrait**

I wanted to create a piece that conveyed the awareness of support and community that I had felt in my family. I had become comfortable using the fabric that I have accumulated from my grandma. Two of the things I miss most about my grandparents are their hugs and the smell of their home. There was just this comfort in it—a comfort that I am reminded of when I pull out a piece of fabric and inhale the scent of my grandparent's former home which still clings to the fabric. This is an experience that contributed to my fascination with heirlooms.

The mixed media pieces, seen in *Figure 10* and *Figure 11*, are an embrace between clay as part of me, fabric as part of my grandma, and the metal structures behind to represent my grandpa's strength and stability. The blooming flowers placed some of them are a display of new growth. All together they are representative of the embrace of a family. Some of the clay structures are covered with fabric to reinforce that familial embrace. I started calling these *Pods* individually because each little family is much like a pod of their own. I created an assortment of these pods, which are, representative of my family, my community, those that support us and care about our well-being. There are many of them and the collection continues to grow, just like we continually grow and

change as people. A whole gathering of these pods nestled together. This is my attempt at creating an heirloom for my own children.



*Figure 10: Singular Pod, Size 12"x12"x6", Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*





*Figure 11: Family Gathering Nestle, Size Varies between the forms and how they are displayed, Mixed Media, Photograph by the author.*

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSION

#### Findings

Meaning of the object to the individual or connection with the owner is what makes an heirloom important or worthy of passing down to another family member. Meaning is established in different ways. “Material culture objects always have histories, contexts, and meanings that should be thoughtfully considered and interpreted to signify information. When taken seriously, all objects can share information” (Buffington & Wilson McKay, 2013, p.190). Through my inquiry I found that I have also clutched to many things simply because of their origin. Inevitably, everyone has a different connection to their objects or reasons behind those connections so what transforms an object into an heirloom is dependent upon the individual. Someone may save a family piece of jewelry because it is connected with their history or there is a story associated with the particular item, much like the ruby ring that was discussed in one of the survey responses. Another individual may hold on to an item simply because it reminds them of the lost loved one and helps them recall memories with the individual. Varying life experiences and connections contribute to and create a wide array of what objects might be deemed as heirlooms and what might be discarded upon someone’s death. If the story or thoughts of the object are not shared then they will likely hold little value to those around us, much like my grandpa’s clothing.



“A/r/tography is certainly about inquiry, yet inquiry also involves the presentation of new understandings (rather than findings) from time to time” (Given, 2008, para 7). Through this investigation I have been able to again find myself, open up once more, again learned to take risks, and start making art that is meaningful to my family and myself. The story of the creation of this work is important to me and it includes my daughter both as a participant during my work time and as a future recipient of my heirlooms. She was so curious throughout this work. She asked questions, touched and played with the media, and helped me to realize that it is those memories, which we create with objects that influence how an object gains importance. Although I was teaching her about the mediums and how we assembled them, she helped me as the learner in this instance. It is through this work with her that I came to my understanding of what brings meaning to specific objects. “...you don’t just buy children presents and hand them over, but actively play with them. If you give a paint set, you also gift them the time of painting together” (Miller, 2016, p. 36). The moments where she gets to take part will be the ones she holds on to and what will make the heirloom relevant for her. While the massive fabric stash may not be meaningful to her, if I share the stories of my family members sewing when I was little it will help her connect to it and most likely create some meaning for her. I am hopeful she will remember playing with the pieces, watching intently as I sewed, and *holding the pins* for me. Had I not grown up watching my family members sew it may not be such a cherished process to me, and that fabric would likely be of little value. The holder of an object often also carry stories of the object, but stories and memories of an object are not limited to the holder of the object, however they will eventually fade if not shared. We become the storyteller of the family

when the time is right and when we need to. We share stories as they become relevant in our lives and pertinent to what we are doing at the time. We create new memories around objects by using them, talking about them, or reinventing them but they can only gain heirloom status when these experiences are shared.

This work has helped me bring new life and meaning to objects that would otherwise be sitting, stored away in a box. “A/r/tography is about each of us living a life of deep meaning enhanced through perceptual practices that reveal what was once hidden, create what has never been known, and imagine what we hope to achieve” (Irwin, 2004, p. 36). Without creating these memories with Charlotte, my daughter, or telling her the story of them, these relics will understandably, likely become meaningless to her.



*Figure 12: Photos on Left top and bottom Family Gathering Nestle, Size Varies between the forms and how they are displayed, Mixed Media. Photos on the left top and bottom Singular Pod, Showing Daughter Charlotte's Involvement in the process, Mixed Media, All Photographs by the author.*

### **Future Plans**

After this revitalization of my own work I hope to do the same to many of my lessons within the classroom. I want to help students develop more meaning in their work while still picking up the basic skills to present their meaning in a successful manner. I

plan to also keep making art both at home with my children as well as at school with students, peers, and co-workers. I had shut out a lot before I began this research but I have also changed and opened back up a lot during the process. “To live the life of an artist who is also a researcher and teacher is to live a life of awareness, a life that permits openness to the complexity around us, a life that intentionally sets out to perceive things differently” (Irwin, 2004, p.33). I have grown as an artist, teacher, researcher, and learner and found new ways to build upon and create meaning. I have found that through moments of engagement, conversation, or use we can expand the value of the object, but more importantly we can create a connection with someone and generate memories to hold on to.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: IRB Approval Verification



#### *Institutional Review Board*

DATE: February 5, 2019

TO: Samantha Disney-Saxton

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1355971-2]  
Becoming a Story Teller Through Investigation of Family Heirlooms and History: an A/  
R/Tography Experience

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 4, 2019

EXPIRATION DATE: February 4, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

## Appendix B: Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

**Title of study: Becoming the Story Teller Through Investigation of Family Heirlooms & History: An A/R/Tography Experience**

**Researcher: Samantha Disney-Saxton**  
**Graduate School of Art and Design · (719)-475-6110 ext. 1415 · disn3946@bears.unco.edu**

**Advisor: Connie Stewart**  
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**Purpose and description:** I am investigating heirlooms; the variety of types of heirlooms, why individuals hold on to them, and what meaning they hold to individuals. I will be looking also at my own family heirlooms and family history. In so doing, I hope to gain a greater understanding into my own family and background. Through investigating the heirlooms of others I hope to gain a broader understanding of the reasons people retain heirlooms and the types of heirlooms that people retain.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked questions that pertain to heirlooms. Some questions will be more broad and some will be specific to your experience with heirlooms.

Your responses will be compiled with the responses of others to look for common or varying themes in relation to heirlooms. Some of your narrative may be included in the written analysis of gathered information but surveys are anonymous so you will never be identified in any way.

The risks in this study are no greater than those typically encountered when reminiscing upon family memories. Some discomfort may arise for those that have recently suffered a family loss or to those that the topic of family is a sensitive one. The potential benefit of this research is that you will be able to share your family narrative, and express your personal view on family heirlooms. For some this may bring a greater sense of awareness or potential personal importance surrounding this topic.

As the researcher I will take every precaution in order to protect your anonymity. Your online survey will be entirely anonymous. The data will be stored on a password protected hard drive, accessible to only to the researcher. When this study is complete the written results will only reference pseudonyms and will not reference a participants name specifically. In the event that you are a relative of the researcher and are being interviewed directly your name may be used in the results of this research unless you indicate otherwise.

You will not benefit from participation in this study, aside from the opportunity to share your family's story.



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Participant initials here

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

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Participant's signature                      Date

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Researcher's signature                      Date